

THE ZOOLOGIST

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THE GREAT WHITE HERON (*ARDEA ALBA*).

By R. B. LODGE.

(PLATE VI.)

AFTER finding the Pelicans' nesting colony in Albania (*cf. ante*, p. 365), my next task was to find *Ardea alba*. And here there was some little difficulty to start with, for the month's search for *Pelecanus crispus* had brought me well into May, and it was doubtful if I should be in time for eggs. But the authorities differed so much that I really knew very little about the proper time for the nesting season. Seebohm says that they nest from mid-May to June, while Howard Saunders mentions a nest (found in 1863) in an old fir-tree which contained young birds recently hatched on June 28th; while others say that they nest earlier in the year in the reeds.

The first place to be searched was a large Albanian lake, where the birds certainly were to be seen plentifully, but all my efforts to discover a nesting colony were fruitless. In vain we struggled through submerged forests, and made distant expeditions to the further end of the lake of some days' duration. The information received in answer to inquiries was, as usual, utterly untrustworthy, and many days were wasted in going to see nests of the White Stork, Grey Heron, and even the Hooded Crow. The people in these countries appear to be quite incapable of distinguishing one bird from another, and the know-

ledge of the local names, even when combined with showing them coloured drawings, is of very little use. After nearly a fortnight's hard work, with no results, I turned my back on this place, intending to try another locality which seemed to promise some chance of success. Before I left, however, I had succeeded in photographing *A. alba* while feeding near to the town very early in the morning, and in securing some characteristic positions of this most beautiful and stately member of the Heron family.

It is true that sometimes *A. alba* assumes an ungraceful and stiff attitude, especially when the long neck is held upright and inclined rather forward; but at other times, and especially when the neck assumes an S-like curve, the bird is extremely graceful in its snowy white plumage. The back-plumes project over the tail, giving it somewhat the appearance of a Crane. Its method of fishing is quite different from that of *cinerea*; while the latter stands motionless and expectant waiting for its prey to approach within reach of its dagger-like beak, *alba* stalks rapidly through the water, snapping here and there as it goes at any small fry it may see. The stomach of one I shot was very much distended, but contained nothing larger than a stickleback. Once I had the opportunity of watching Little Egrets (*A. garzetta*), *alba*, and *cinerea*, together, and could compare the habits of the three species at the same time; *garzetta* was even more active than *alba*, running through the water, and sometimes using its wings to help itself along when it saw anything good two or three yards away.

The fresh locality for more than a fortnight only provided the usual disappointments. The promise of a good "baksheesh" for any news of a nest only resulted in making short expeditions which led to nothing. At last, one day (May 27th), after wading through some large reed-beds, I was making my way back to the boat, utterly exhausted with hunger and fatigue, when I heard the unmistakable croaking and grunting of nesting Herons. On firing my pistol several Common Herons got up, but with them were some White ones, and I knew that I had at last hit on a nesting-place. The sight gave me fresh strength, and for another hour I fought and struggled through the reeds. The water was over waist-deep, though the bottom was firm and fairly level. But the reeds were immense. Each step was only accomplished by

the exercise of my whole strength and weight, while it was impossible to see more than a yard on each side of me.

At last I found a nest like a Purple Heron's perched up in the reeds, containing four eggs, but, as the Common Herons were evidently nesting there too, it was absolutely necessary to make perfectly sure without the possibility of any mistake as to which species they belonged. Retiring, therefore, to a little distance, I waited, motionless and hidden, as well as I could manage, until a pair of veritable *Ardea alba* hovered over the nest, preparing to alight on it. Only those who have experienced the difficulties and disappointments of such a prolonged search can appreciate the delight with which I watched them, and realized that at last I had succeeded in my quest.

After some much-needed refreshments I hurried back to the spot with the camera, and it will serve to give some idea of the denseness of the reeds when I relate that two of us searched in vain for that nest for more than two hours, though I thought I had left a track to it plainly visible. However, after completely losing ourselves, we had to give it up until the next day. And then we spent two more hours before we found it again. In the interval one of the four eggs had hatched, and the other three were on the point of doing the same. It was with great difficulty that these three eggs were saved as eggs.

During our search several other nests were found, but no more eggs. All the rest held young; some only a few days old, others nearly half-grown, the young *cinerea* being nearly fledged. On being approached the young birds leave the nests, and crawl through the reeds to some distance, returning when the danger has passed. On these wanderings they use the beak bent at an angle like a hook, and by hitching their chins over the reeds pull themselves along, and also by taking hold of the reeds between the mandibles.

Both nests and eggs seem to be somewhat smaller than those of *A. cinerea*. The nests were sometimes raised about three feet above the water, at others almost flush. The adult birds are quieter than *cinerea* or *purpurea*, and I only heard low croakings while waiting at their nests. They are exceedingly timid, and I spent six days in this reed-bed before I could succeed in obtaining a photograph. Every plan I could think of was tried in

vain. First of all I began with a long string attached to the shutter of a well-hidden camera, while I waited at a distance with reeds tied all round my waist. Then the electric camera was tried, and, though this went off several times, I was afraid to trust to it alone. My misgivings proved to be too well founded. They were only *nearly* successful, but something or other always happened to spoil them. Then an empty nest was found rather high up in the reeds about fifteen yards from a likely nest containing two young ones. Crouching behind this empty nest, I spent two days of nine and ten hours each, hardly daring to move, in water up to my coat-pockets. And when they did at last visit the nest they were very suspicious, sometimes only showing up through the reeds behind the nest, and several times left without feeding their young at all, and sometimes hovered over the nest without alighting. On these occasions the young became very excited and clamorous, constantly uttering a cry which sounded exactly like "be quick, be quick," repeated many times. In this cry of "be quick" I thoroughly sympathised; I knew the poor little beasts were hungry, and so was I, and tired of waiting in such an uncomfortable position. Besides, the leeches had got into my boots, and through the holes in my breeches made by the reeds, while I was losing blood all the time; for my wading-trousers had been cut literally to ribbons days before at the beginning of the search, and I had received several nasty stabs in the face, uncomfortably near my eyes, from the broken ends of reeds while forcing my way through them. But eventually four or five photographs were obtained of these timid birds at close quarters, just in time for me to rush off and catch the steamer for Fiume on the following day, on my way to the Dobrudscha after *Pelecanus onocrotalus*.

Note.—It is hardly correct to describe the beak of *alba* as black during breeding season, and feet blackish. The base of the beak is yellow, which runs to a point on each side of upper mandible and to the bottom of lower mandible, leaving top edge of upper and sides of lower mandible black. The tibia is yellow; foot black in front and back, with yellowish stripe along the sides as far as the toes, which are greenish black. Iris chrome-yellow; bare skin round eyes green.

NOTES ON THE ORNITHOLOGY OF OXFORDSHIRE,
1904.

By O. V. APLIN, F.L.S., M.B.O.U.

(Concluded from p. 418.)

May 1st.—A very nice May-day, and so far a really genial and favourable spring. Pear and plum blossom well out.

2nd.—A male Dotterel was shot from a small flock on a ploughed field about a couple of miles to the north of Banbury. I had an opportunity of examining it in the flesh. Legs and feet flesh-brown; iris dark brown; bill blackish horn; weight, 4 oz. less a worn sixpence; total length, 9·2 in.; alar expanse, 18·6 in.; wing, from the carpal joint, 6·05 in. This is the only local spring Dotterel I ever handled. I was afterwards told by a good observer, who knew the Golden Plover well, that at the end of April he saw a flock of about a dozen Plovers, which were no doubt Dotterel, on the open high-lying arable land about the "Merrymouth," above Fifield. They were described as wheeling about low down near the ground, smaller than Golden Plover, and greyer or bluer at a distance.

10th.—News from Mr. W. Newton, of Crowmarsh Battle, that he saw a Serin near there on the 5th, and had a good chance of examining it while it was perched on the bare stem of a young chestnut-tree. This bird is new to the county list.

21st.—Mr. Newton saw a pair of White Wagtails on the banks of the Thames near Crowmarsh.

31st.—Returned home after a month's absence. Heard the Corn-Crake from study window.

June 3rd.—Some young Rooks still in the nests. Two fresh Sparrow-Hawk's eggs taken in the Wayhouse meadows brought in to-day; a rare occurrence in this woodless parish.

4th.—News from Mr. Calvert that he saw a Wheatear between Langley and Fordwells on the 1st inst. This bird is rarely seen in Oxon (except perhaps on the Chilterns) in summer.

6th.—Examined adult female Hobby, shot at Tusmore on May 16th.

7th.—In Fifield village House-Martins breeding in some numbers, and so low down that the nests can almost be touched by anyone standing on the ground. In the woods noticed Nightjar, and saw in the bracken the spot where eggs were taken two days before; also two Sparrow-Hawk's nests used this year, and heard a Nightingale. Had news of a Buzzard shot in the neighbourhood two months ago.

8th.—On the open arable land of the Crown Farms about Langley (formerly the forest) stone walls largely take the place of hedges, and nesting accommodation is scarce and crowded. In the small "Dovehouse" close at Langley, which had a big hedge on two sides of it, we found the following nests to-day:—House-Sparrow, three nests with eggs; big deep domed nests at the top of the hedge. Chaffinch, one nest with eggs. Linnet, three nests with eggs, three nests ready for eggs, and two nests with young. Greenfinch, two nests with eggs and one with young. Song-Thrush, one nest with eggs. Turtle-Dove, one nest with eggs; this nest was formed entirely of the dry creeping root-stems of "squitch." I also saw a Pied Wagtail's nest in the side of a straw-rick, which was then empty, but at 7.15 a.m. the next day contained one Wagtail's and a Cuckoo's egg.

To Bampton, and on this and the next day I noticed many Peewits on such of the big open meadows along the Isis which had been pastured; some had already gathered into small flocks. Moorhens are very numerous about the rush-beds, Dabchicks common, and there are a few breeding Wild Ducks. I noticed the Reed-Warbler in willow-beds near Tadpole and Radcot bridges, but the Reed-Bunting is the characteristic small bird of the belt of rushes, reeds, and other water-plants lying between the river and the rarely-used towing-path. I heard four Corn-Crakes, two of them in one large meadow. In the arable land between the marshy village of Clanfield and Bampton, which is nearly as flat as the fens, I was surprised to meet with a pair of Stonechats, the male sitting on a gate. The local Corn-Bunting is fairly common on this land, but I had found it far more so on the high ground as I came from Burford, where this year the "curlock" is rampant, and the fields shine out—a light golden

colour—miles away. Some old pollard willows at the side of the raised marsh-road leading down to the river are the haunt of Tree-Sparrows. On my way home I heard a Corn-Crake in the Cherwell valley at Somerton.

11th.—Mr. P. T. Duffield reported in the 'Field' to-day a bird he had seen over the river at Oxford, which was evidently a Black Tern.

19th.—Lesser Whitethroat continues to sing in shrubs in front of the house, and I think must be breeding. I have seen some about the village all the season ; it is a garden bird to some extent.

23rd.—The Red-backed Shrikes have had their eggs taken once this year, and now are quartered on the west side of the railway-station ; they are always somewhere close to the railway. Listened to a Quail in a barley-field on Tadmorton Heath, and was told of another near there. It did not call much until after 7.30 p.m., and repeated the call from three to eight times each time it called ; there was a slight emphasis on the second syllable.

24th.—News from Mr. Fowler, at Kingham, that the Marsh-Warbler had just hatched its young.

25th.—While waiting for the Badgers to come out, I heard the other Quail. This seems to be a Quail year. Mr. E. Colegrove heard one near South Newington, and Mr. W. Newton wrote from Crowmarsh that he heard more Quail calling in the spring than for many years ; the first on May 26th. A nest containing seven hard-sat eggs (two of which I have) was found in a barley-field (when it was cut) on Waterloo Farm, Burford, on August 26th. In other years the Quail has nested late in the season. I have an egg from another August nest (1900), and one found in September, and have seen a record of a third August nest.

There is an uncertain ebb and flow in the numbers of our migratory birds each summer. The Redstart was scarcer than usual last year, and still more so this season. Ray's Wagtail has been quite rare for two or three years. House-Martins are increasing again.

26th.—The habit of singing while perched on buildings is now common with the Song-Thrush. A favourite perch is the

roof-ridge of this house, which is rather high; and Tennyson might well have exclaimed of them, "And loudly sings the mounted Thrush."

30th.—To see Marsh-Warblers in the nest at Kingham (very early this year); only one young one remained, and that on the point of leaving. We caught it and let it go; it was of a dull pale brown—not nearly such a bright brown as the young of the Reed-Warbler. The nest was in willow-herb. Saw a pair of Shrikes there, and Mr. Fowler reported meeting with several around there.

July 7th.—Great Tit feeding young in hole in garden-wall. Do Tits usually rear two broods in a season? One often meets with late eggs. Lesser Whitethroat very merry this hot afternoon.

9th.—Country drying up. 80° in shade to-day.

12th.—A female Badger sent down from Tadmarton Heath weighed only nineteen pounds.

14th.—Hot dry weather. Rooks destructive to potatoes. Those shot are said to be very thin. A Spotted Flycatcher has laid three eggs in a Goldfinch's nest in a pear-tree, from which the young flew in June. A small feather or two appear to have been added and a little hair.

18th.—The sharp and destructive summer drought (having begun so early in the season) continues. Apricots already ripe.

19th.—Peewits have had a good season, and have benefited by the decline in cultivation. Goldfinches are common.

21st.—Barn-Owl now noisy.

24th.—Young Hedge-Sparrows still in nest.

25th.—A deluge of rain after two or three days with showers.

30th.—Two hayricks put up at Langley on a Thursday and Saturday had each a Yellow Bunting's nest with three eggs in them by the following Thursday.

31st.—Grasshopper-Warbler singing well.

August 6th.—News from Mr. Calvert he saw two Curlews rise from a seed-field, where manure had been carted, on the 3rd inst.

8th.—A Flycatcher feeding at 8 p.m., when it was getting dusk; its bill snapped quite loudly.

12th.—Many Swallows and Martins on the roof; nearly a fortnight ago they congregated there.

13th.—Saw a Pied Woodpecker in the avenue at Bloxham Grove, and the owner told me afterwards that in the summer he had seen one come out of a hole in a big ash-tree close to the avenue.

14th.—A big gathering of Swifts in the forenoon, high up in the cloudy wet sky, wheeling about and noisy.

16th.—Still plenty of Swifts. Robins made their song remarkable this evening.

18th.—Several Swifts this evening, but the bulk must have gone after the 16th.

20th.—Flock of about thirty Mistle-Thrushes in oat-stubble. Blackbirds in the garden seem to live on plums now.

21st.—Two Swifts.

24th.—One Swift. Mr. R. W. Calvert at dusk flushed two or three Ring-Ouzels from some seeding kale at Langley.

27th.—Willow-Wren singing.

September 1st.—Many Song-Thrushes in root-fields. Mistle-Thrushes very abundant on stubbles and grass-fields, but not in roots.

3rd.—Good many Meadow-Pipits in roots; this is early. A poor Partridge year, and some birds can hardly fly yet. Flock of two or three hundred Linnets. Many Ray's Wagtails on grass and in root-fields; clearly on migration.

7th.—A great congregation of Martins and a few Swallows on the roof this morning.

9th.—Two Land-Rails formed part of the bag to-day; one of them weighed eight ounces, and its hard muscular stomach contained one large whole earwig, and the remains of several others, besides a lot of hard grit. Saw a Wheatear.

12th.—In early evening little noisy flocks of Swallows and Martins, all flying in the same direction.

13th.—No congregation of them on the roof this morning, as has been the case every morning lately. Willow-Wren sang. Chiffchaff in (autumn) song.

17th.—A gathering of Martins and a few Swallows on roof.

19th.—Starlings eating apples lately.

20th.—Great congregation of House-Martins (only) on roof. Swallows were sitting singing in apple-trees yesterday. Weather glorious.

22nd.—A lot of Martins on roof. Examined a young Hobby with wings hardly full-grown, which was shot at Tusmore early this month. Also a Whimbrel shot at Barford in May.

24th.—Many restless Meadow-Pipits in roots; a flock of one to two hundred all got up and went away. Red-legged Partridges are very scarce this season, not having recovered from the effects of the wet summer of 1903, and the following wet winter.

27th.—The bulk of the Swallows and Martins have gone.

October 6th.—A few Martins.

8th.—Half a score of Swallows on the roof, some quite young. Hardly any seen this month.

11th.—A few Swallows and Martins in front of the house early.

13th.—Five Swallows on the roof.

14th.—Starlings have been most destructive to fruit this year. To-day I saw one eating Burgundy pears on a wall-tree; these were then gathered, and one bird went to a tree of John Dowy crabs, when I shot it.

17th.—A Pied Wagtail has sung a good deal lately; this bird really seems to sing almost as much in autumn as in spring, but this is not saying much.

18th.—A Woodcock shot yesterday. Grey Wagtail in Sorbrook. —

19th.—Wren sings well.

21st.—When going to see the hounds draw the gorse, at 7.30 a.m., and very foggy, I heard a Yellow Bunting and two Thrushes singing at 7.15, and the wheeze of a Brambling from some beech-trees.

26th.—Redwings. Linnets still sing. Song-Thrushes sing well.

30th.—The Grey Wagtail is common here this autumn, and Mr. Fowler has noticed unusual numbers at Oxford and Kingham. Several have flown over this garden.

November 4th.—Very nice dry weather now, warm and pleasant, and the autumn tints most beautiful. Plenty of roses in bloom.

10th.—Fieldfares. I watched a Barred Woodpecker feeding on something he had hammered out of a dead and broken elm-branchlet for about ten minutes.

16th.—While some of the many Song-Thrushes about are singing, others are silent and look foreign. A Mistle-Thrush sang.

18th.—Nuthatch at Broughton. We see and hear none here now.

21st.—Season turned cold suddenly in the middle of the day, and a great deal of snow fell at night.

22nd.—Sharp frost.

24th.—Very severe frost; down to 15°, and only 20° at 10 a.m. Starlings here all day feeding on the poor watery asparagus-berries. A flock of Bramblings, with Chaffinches, under the beech-trees in and near the avenue at Bloxham Grove, where the ground was comparatively free from snow, feeding on the fallen mast, of which there is a good crop with well-developed nuts this year. Bramblings are quick, active foragers. Their usual call-note is a rather harsh, hard "chip," "chzip," or "gep" (that of the Chaffinch sounds to me like "yip"). One only occasionally hears the curious croaking "weeeech," which, heard from the beech-trees, usually first announces that the Brambling has arrived. It is a difficult sound to describe, as it seems to vary, and sometimes sounds like "sweeeek" or "sweee-erk."

26th.—Very severe frost. Thousands of small birds on the snowy stubbles—Bramblings, Chaffinches, Tree-Sparrows, Linnets, Yellowhammers, Greenfinches, and great flocks of Larks. Some Corn-Buntings about, and a few Meadow-Pipits in the sheep-folds. A "big hawk" (probably a female Peregrine) upset a Partridge drive.

27th.—So severe is the frost that the Sorbrook between Bodicote and Lower Grove Mills bears crowds of skaters and walkers.

28th.—A slow thaw began, and the Hedge-Sparrow sang. A single Golden Plover shot flying over Tadmarton Heath.

December 5th.—Many Bramblings about, and Fieldfares have been fairly numerous.

7th.—Had news of a Hawfinch's nest found last summer in the side brush of an elm on the lawn at the Grove.

8th.—Fall of snow, but melted. The Song-Thrushes left with the late frost, and the Grey Wagtails so conspicuously numerous earlier in the autumn have disappeared.

12th.—Little flock of Redpolls and Goldfinches in the alders near South Newington. A single Golden Plover flew over, calling.

17th.—Up to 52° in the shade. During the sharp snap birds ate all the pyracanthus-berries on one tree, and thinned the holly-berries very much. Greenfinches continue to rifle the fruit of the sweet-briars.

20th.—Small flock of travelling Peewits. In the 'Field' of the 3rd inst. the Rev. F. P. Long records seeing a Black Redstart in the city of Oxford on the 22nd November.

22nd.—Hard frost again.

23rd.—Not over 24° all day.

25th.—A Song-Thrush sang a little despite the frost.

28th.—Mild again.

29th.— 50° in the shade!

30th.—The winter aconite, which had its petals free of the earth, but not turned up on the 18th, is now fully out.

31st.—A few Meadow-Pipits about a sheep-fold.

SOME FISH-NOTES FROM GREAT YARMOUTH FOR 1906.

BY ARTHUR H. PATTERSON, A.M.B.A.

My fish-entries in the "Note-book" for 1906 are, to me, of no small interest, from the fact that three new species have been added to the fauna of the county of Norfolk, one of which has been pronounced, on competent authority, to be new to the fauna of Great Britain, viz. *Scomber thunnina*, a species of Bonito by no means unknown in the seas adjoining the west of Europe. The other two are the Megrin and the Jago's Goldsinny.

In March I obtained a number of wide-mouthed bottles, in which I placed formalin, and fitted them with corks. These were distributed among our local shrimpers for them to drop in any strange small fishes they might perchance find among the Shrimps. The success I met with among the Crustacea I have already made known (*ante*, p. 331). The first fish brought in was a "bull-dog" Whiting, about a span long, on April 2nd; after which date fishes good, bad, and indifferent almost daily arrived.

A very pretty little *Bubalis* (*Cottus bubalis*) turned up on April 26th; on the sides were well-defined bands of a darkish hue on a pinkish ground. Length, $2\frac{3}{4}$ in. Another, May 12th.

On April 30th two Montagu's Suckers (*Liparis montagui*), both females, came to hand, with an example of the Megrin, or "Scald-fish" (*Arnoglossus laterna*), $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. long. The delicate skin had been somewhat abraded; it seems difficult to procure and preserve one intact. Two more Montagu's Suckers, full of ova, were received on May 1st, and subsequently some others.

May 11th.—Obtained a four-inch Rock Goby (*Gobius niger*) from a shrimper.

Smelt-catching has been most industriously pursued on Breydon this year, and in some instances with profitable results.

When plentiful returns are small, and when Smelts are somewhat scarcer prices go up. The highest price ever realized for Smelts, to my knowledge, was in May, 1905, when five shillings and ninepence was sent per score by London salesmen, after all expenses had been deducted. Two shillings a score appears to be the minimum price.

Quite a large number of Sail Flukes (*Rhombus megastoma*), varying from 11 in. to 18 in., brought over from Lowestoft, were exposed for sale in the town during the first week in May.

On May 17th a large Skate (probably the Long-nosed Ray), part of which I saw, was on view in the town, having been sent, I believe, from the South of England. It weighed 120 lb.

The Three-spined Stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus*) is singularly indifferent to the water in which it finds itself, and is found quite as lively and protestingly in a beachman's seine as in a boy's net at the ditches. My boys brought some home in May. One fish I allowed to remain two days in fresh water, and then transferred it to a tank in which lived some Whelks, a Sea-Anemone, and a Risso's Crab (*Xantho rivulosa*). It seemed perfectly at ease, and showed no irritation or surprise when, after five days in their society, it again found itself in fresh water, in company with several small Carp.

Jago's Goldsinny (*Ctenolabrus rupestris*), new to Norfolk, came to hand on June 5th.

A "double" Turbot was also brought to me on June 5th, which I ate.

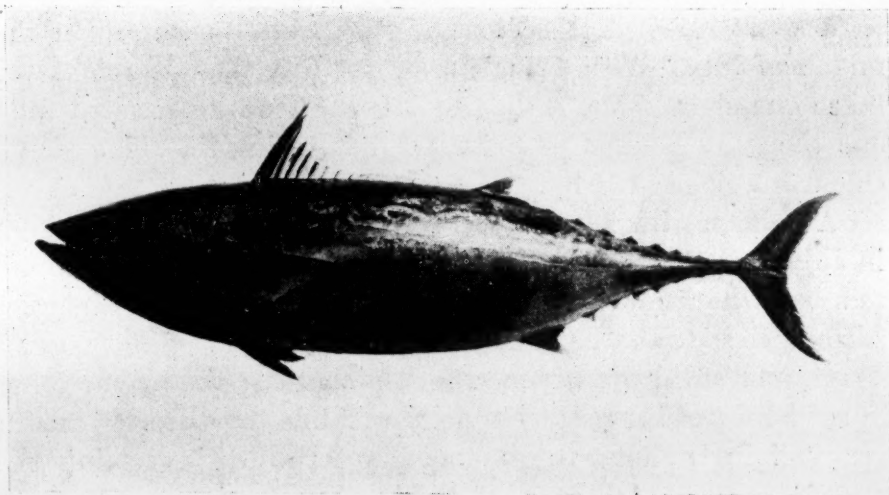
A great number of Little Gobies (*Gobius minutus*), taken on Breydon, full of spawn; and a White Goby (*Latrunculus pellucidus*), the first I have ever known taken there, came up in a small trawl-net.

On June 19th I met with a Turbot almost wholly white, of three pounds weight; the only traces of the normal colour on the upper surface were a small ring of brown around each eye, and a fine splashing of the same hue on the surrounding fins. There were no tubercles on the upper side, which was as smooth and polished as a china-plate.

"Myriads untold" of tiny Herrings—so-called "whitebait," and more correctly "herring-syle." In June, boys with small

landing-nets were to be seen catching them, on the edge of Breydon, in sufficient quantities to fry. Flounders and Eels fed on them gluttonously, the latter paying scant attention to the worms of the "babbers," who complain of a most disastrous Eel-fishing. Terns and Gulls fed bountifully on them.

I have a strong suspicion that their presence in such vast swarms on our coast accounts greatly for the very apparent migration of Mackerel that set in, too. This year's Mackerel fishery was so revived in consequence that something akin to the old-time fishery obtained. No less than fifty luggers went out after them, and great catches were made. The total catch amounted to over 145 lasts, 12,000 fish going to a "last."



SCOMBER THUNNINA.

The largest haul of any one boat landed at one time was a last. Prices varied from 12s. to £1 per hundred, of 120 fish. One boat earned £150 for the two months' trips (in May and June).

Among the breeze-loving Mackerel came a few Scribbled Mackerel (*Scomber scriptus*), Surmullet (*Mullus surmuletus*), and some Garfish (*Belone vulgaris*).

I obtained a Mackerel wholly devoid of stripings on June 27th. Length, 15 in.

Soles came into the roadstead so numerous this summer that at least a dozen shrimpers substituted small trawls for the

shrimp-dredges while the "rush" of fish was on. On July 5th I saw fifty-six pairs of good Soles in one Shrimp-shop, the combined catches of two boats the previous night. The Soles appeared to inshore in search of lugworms, and also took *Nereis diversicolor* freely. I did not dissect any, but I have a strong suspicion that the herring-syle were no small inducement. On July 4th one man, who spasmodically trawls on Breydon, and who is known to the fraternity as "Lucky Bob," informed me he had taken thirty-two pairs of Soles thereon; his largest measured, he assured me, 22 in.

I need hardly refer again to the capture of the *Scomber thunnina* (ante, p. 354). This is, I take it, my best "find" as yet for the East Norfolk list of fishes (cf. fig. p. 455).

A great inset of Sea-Trout (*Salmo trutta*) occurred in the middle of July. With a single draw-net fifty pounds weight was taken one night. Mr. R. Beazor informed me he received fully one thousand pounds of Salmon-Trout during the "invasion." One fish weighed $16\frac{1}{4}$ lb., and several scaled 12 lb.

A Salmon with a most peculiarly shaped head arrived here in July from Scotland. The upper part of the head was round as a ball, the "nose" turning into the mouth, and lying quite flat and close to the palate. The lower jaw was of the normal shape, and stood out beyond the "forehead"; the tongue lying in the hollow of the useless under jaw, while the distorted mouth very obligingly shut up close and compactly. It is certainly the most grotesque "bull-head" fish I have yet seen.

A second Megrim came to hand July 30th, and a ten-inch Lemon Sole (*Solea lascaris*) was saved for me by Mr. Robert Beazor on August 8th.

A very pretty little Ballan Wrasse (*Labrus maculatus*), of a chocolate colour, sent me from Sheringham, a spot that deserves to be carefully worked; and, judging from what I have had occasionally sent to me from that neighbourhood, I imagine it to be a fine field for an ichthyologist's attentions. Aug. 30th.

Aug. 30th, saw a codling, 20 in. long, of a rich red colour, lying on a fishmonger's slab, answering very greatly to Couch's description of the so-called "Dorse."

I received a young Picked Dogfish (*Acanthias vulgaris*), which was "cast" in a boat soon after the parent had been

taken off the hook. The yolk-sac was still attached to the fish. This was on Sept. 30th.

A Flounder, 4 in. long, white on both sides, was caught on Breydon, Oct. 14th.

Drawn in by the under-current, on a westerly wind, thousands of dead Herrings bestrewed the high-water line, and below it, on the beach, in October. Examining a number of them, I found they had been in many instances bitten by the Dogs; pieces the size and shape of Brazil nuts were taken out of the back, a fish seldom showing two bites. I take it that many had been bitten when swimming free, and others when helplessly enmeshed in the nets, in which case they would be thrown overboard again.

The Anchovy (*Engraulis encrasicolus*) is very oily and tender-skinned, and among the rare examples I have seen taken in the Herring-nets I have not yet found one perfect. An example, $6\frac{3}{4}$ in., taken on Oct. 23rd, had the skin much abraded. I have put it into formalin, and placed it in the Tolhouse Museum, where a number of other specimens, besides some of those mentioned in these notes, have been deposited. Visitors to Yarmouth should make a point of seeing this pretty little museum, located in one of the quaintest of the few ancient buildings still preserved to us.

A number of Scads, or "Horse-Mackerel" (*Trachurus trachurus*), were washed up on the beach, Oct. 27th.

Beyond a few small Porpoises, I have seen nothing extraordinary brought ashore from the Herring-grounds. Two or three, in all probability thrown overboard from the boats on entering the harbour, have floated to Breydon, where a number of Hooded Crows and *thousands* (from five thousand to seven thousand at a time!) of Gulls are glad to dissect these or any other queer things the tide may see fit to fling upon the mud-flats.

The Little Squid (*Sepiolia rondeletti*) is hardly a fish, but it merits notice by its abundance on this coast in the summer months. The Shrimp-boats net thousands, and some numbers find their way on Breydon. I was interested in seeing some boiled ones at a shrimp-er's one afternoon, when the shrimp-wife informed me that she frequently saved those caught with the

Shrimps for an Italian neighbour, who was exceedingly fond of them, having acquired the taste when in Naples. I was curious to sample them, and ate one or two. They were certainly not bad eating, and very much like a Crab in flavour. One only wanted good teeth to really appreciate them. In July I met with another cephalopod that greatly interested me. I saw it entangled in the meshes of a small Breydon trawl, hung up to dry, as I was rowing past. Curiosity prompted me to "rescue" it, when its pointed "tail" and comparatively long fin-like appendages struck me as differing from those of *Loligo vulgaris*. On comparing it later with an example in the Biological Station at Lowestoft, I was pleased to find it *L. media*, and as such new to my list.

In the summer of 1906 the Aldeburgh Smelt-fishing appears to have been a failure. This the ignorant fishermen laid to the blame of the few pairs of Terns still nesting annually at Orford Ness, and forthwith petitioned "the powers that be" to withdraw protection, and let them be slaughtered off. This had not yet been decided upon when the Sprat fishery also turned out a failure; no Sprats visited Southwold Bay, nor did they put in an appearance until the last week in November. This was attributed to the Herrings working a little further south than usual! As the Terns were gone they could not lay it to their charge. The first indictment was an entirely erroneous one, for the Common and Little Tern feed chiefly on the herring-syle ("whitebait") that teems in local waters during their stay. A Lowestoft gentleman, who has daily records of the sea's temperature, informed me that this has been unusually high, and did not fall to 49° in Lowestoft Harbour until November 25th. Big Herring shoals are not met with until a much lower temperature ensues. I have no hesitation in saying that the influences of tidal currents and the temperature of the water largely ruled the movements of both Smelts and Sprats.

DISAPPEARANCE OF MANY OF OUR HOME-BRED BIRDS IN AUTUMN.

BY ROBERT WARREN.

THE disappearance from their usual haunts of many of our home-bred birds in September and October is so remarkable that I think it worth noting, as it may prove of some interest to those who study the movements of our small birds, notably Chaffinches, Greenfinches, and Yellowhammers. I have from time to time noticed their scarcity in their usual haunts, but, thinking that they had only moved for better feeding to the stubble-fields, took no further notice; while being engaged with, and my entire attention taken up with our late and frequently wet harvest in September and October (often delayed up to the end of the latter month), I did not look after them. After the corn, &c., was secured in the stack-yards, I devoted any leisure I had to wild-fowl-shooting, and the observation of the waders and swimming birds of the estuary and bay.

This total absence of the three above-named species first attracted my attention in the middle of October, 1892, when on a visit to the Co. Cork; for, on revisiting the familiar scenes of my boyhood, wherever I walked, I was surprised at seeing no small birds, where I formerly saw plenty, and in districts famed for their numbers and variety. On a three miles' walk from Monkstown by Shanbally, and Coolmore to Carrigaline Church, and, after service, returning by another line of road—by Rafeen to Monkstown—not a Chaffinch, Greenfinch, or Yellowhammer appeared in sight. Some days after, when returning from Queenstown to Cork, I left the train at the "Little Island" Station, and walked about the district for a couple of hours, along some fine demesnes, and roads with hedgerows especially suited for the haunts of small birds; but not one appeared, the district being as bare of bird-life as that near Carrigaline.

This state of things appeared to me so very remarkable that I

determined, on my return home on Oct. 21st, to see whether the small birds had entirely disappeared from this locality also. I searched everywhere—fields, plantations, roadsides, &c.—but the only birds visible were Robins, Tits, Wrens, and Hedge and Common Sparrows.

In 1903, 1904, and 1905 the disappearance also took place. This season of 1906, by Sept. 28th, neither Chaffinches, Greenfinches, nor Yellowhammers were to be seen anywhere about here. On inquiring of my friend Mr. J. A. Knox, of Belgariff House, Foxford, he stated that he had not seen a Chaffinch for weeks past (where they were unusually numerous all the summer). Then Mr. H. Scroope, of Ballina, who was keeping a sharp look-out, also had the same tale to tell—no Chaffinches, Greenfinches, or Yellowhammers; and, having a good knowledge of birds, he would have recognized even a single specimen if it was visible in the course of his daily walks into the country.

On Sept. 29th I paid another visit to Cork, and was determined to investigate as fully as possible the question of the absence of the small birds from their breeding haunts; but, as in 1902, my experience was the same. On the 30th I went from Cork to Carrigaline by train, and saw no small birds along the line. I then walked half a mile to the church, and, after service, walked a mile to Coolmore, the fine demesne of Major Newhenham, beautifully situated on the estuary of the Carrigaline River. After spending some time in the house, I walked through the demesne out on the road, through Shanbally to the railway station at Rafeen, at least two miles; but during my walks neither Chaffinch, Greenfinch, nor Yellowhammer appeared.

Two days after I searched another line of country, leaving Monkstown by steamer for Ringaskiddy, and walked for nearly three miles by the fields along the shore and Leamont Marsh to Prospect Villa and Castle Warren to Currabinny; but no birds appeared in the course of my walk except half a dozen Sky-Larks and Meadow-Pipits, and a solitary male Stonechat on Simon's Point.

On Oct. 5th I looked up another line of country along the Cork and Macroom Railway to visit Warrenscourt, near the Doonisky Station, twenty miles from the city. On getting out at the station I walked for two miles along the Macroom Road, and

a mile on the Cork side of the station; but, although the hedges and trees were all that could be desired, and there were many scrubby patches of coverts in some fields, no birds except a solitary Great Tit appeared in sight. I then called at the house, but unfortunately both Mrs. and Mr. A. R. Warren being away, I missed the pleasure of meeting them. However, as I had to wait for some hours for the return train to Cork, I whiled away the time by wandering about the demesne, and admiring the magnificent old forest-trees, and the acres of rhododendron and laurel coverts, tenanted by numbers of Pheasants which were running about the walks and drives; and, when wishing for a rest, I sat down for an hour on the shore of one of their beautiful lakes at the foot of the lawn, where I saw a few Teal and some Black-headed Gulls; but during the time I was wandering about the place and sitting by the lake a few Great Tits and Robins were the only other birds seen.

Thus, by inquiry and personal observation, I think I have proved that both here in Sligo and Mayo, as well as in Cork, Chaffinches, Greenfinches, and Yellowhammers leave their summer breeding haunts and migrate to some milder climate. My friend Mr. R. M. Barrington, author of 'The Migration of Birds at Irish Light Stations,' writes to me that he thinks "that most of our home-bred Chaffinches depart in early autumn—perhaps to the south of Europe—and that we have a more northern race amongst us now."

About Oct. 16th an occasional straggler began to appear in this district. On that day I drove to Carra, about three miles inland from this place, and situated at the edge of the bog-country, and on my way I saw one Yellowhammer on the side of the road. On the 19th I observed six or seven Yellowhammers near Castleconnor. On the 25th I saw about a dozen small birds feeding in a weedy patch in the corner of one of my fields. I think some were Linnets and the others Chaffinches, but they were so wild that I could not be certain, for when approached they would all rise and perch in the trees, where they were concealed by the leaves.

From Nov. 1st to 5th I observed many flocks of small birds flying about the fields, which were very restless, and so wild that it was impossible to get near enough to identify them. On the

6th and 8th I was for the first time able to identify some Chaffinches feeding in the corner of my potato-field. On the 9th I walked to Enniscrone (three miles), and at some houses along the roadside I recognized a few Chaffinches, Yellowhammers, and a couple of Common Buntings, but no Greenfinches. The first of the large migratory flocks to this district appears to have been observed on the 3rd by Mr. Scroope at Rahins, two miles outside the town—at least one hundred and fifty Chaffinches resting on trees by the roadside, but very wild—and next day he saw a flock of eighty to one hundred birds on the trees at Downhill, near Bunree, and a few Yellowhammers among them. On the 11th he met another large flock on the trees near Newtowngore Fair Green, and at the same place about forty Greenfinches, but all so wild that it was with difficulty he got close enough for identification.

This great wildness shows evidently that the birds were strangers, and not reared in this neighbourhood. Up to the present date none of the regular haunts about this place—the stackyard, garden, kitchen- and stable-yards—have been occupied by either of the three species, nor will be, I suppose, until later on, when these large flocks of strangers disperse and scatter over the country. I should add that the above remarks apply only to the three species first mentioned.

Moy View.

THE WATER-PIPIT (*ANTHUS SPIPOLETTA*) AS A VISITOR TO ENGLAND.

BY MICHAEL J. NICOLL, F.Z.S., M.B.O.U.

IN 'The Zoologist' for 1904 I wrote a short paper, pointing out that the Tawny Pipit (*Anthus campestris*) is probably a regular visitor to the British Islands during the autumn migration;* and now, from materials collected during the past few years, I will endeavour to show that the Water-Pipit (*A. spipoletta*) may also be looked for with tolerable certainty during both the spring and autumn migrations, *i. e.* January to April and October to December. Until quite recently this species has been looked upon as a "straggler" to this country.

My own observations extend over comparatively a very small part of England, *viz.* the Sussex coast-line and marshes, and of these only that part which lies between Pevensey on the west, and Rye Harbour on the east, a portion of coast-line not more than twenty miles in length; but if, as I intend to show, this species is apparently a regular migrant to this small area, how much more so may it not be found on other parts of the British coast as well. I should like to take this opportunity of calling attention to a most mistaken notion which I have frequently heard expressed, that the district between Pevensey and Rye is a "unique" place for rare birds. I feel quite sure that the east coast is quite as good, if not better, judging by the number of rare "stragglers" obtained or recorded on that coast by Mr. Caton Haigh, Mr. J. H. Gurney, Mr. Patterson, Mr. Arnold, and others. There is a far greater tract of country to be "worked" on the east coast than on the coast of Sussex.

In the course of this paper I intend to give full references to all published records of occurrences of the Water-Pipit in this country. It must be remembered that for every one rare bird

* I have since found that it also occurs here in spring.—M. J. N.

recorded numbers—I might safely say hundreds—pass without being noticed. This is most undoubtedly the case. The late Heinrich Gätke frequently remarks, in his wonderful work ('Die Vogelwarte Helgoland'):—"I would willingly exchange the whole of my collection, wonderful as it is, for all the birds which have occurred here without having been seen or killed, if that were possible."

The Water-Pipit is one of those species which, like the Aquatic Warbler (*Acrocephalus aquaticus*), is easily overlooked owing to its resemblance to an allied species.

I have found that the best way of distinguishing the Water-Pipit from the Rock-Pipit (*Anthus obscurus*), even when flying and at some distance, is that the under parts of *A. spipoletta* appear quite white, and this is especially noticeable when the bird is on the wing. The white pattern of the outer tail-feathers is also a good character, but this is not so noticeable unless the bird is seen when about to settle.

These facts I pointed out at a meeting of the British Ornithologists' Club in November, 1904 (Bull. B.O.C. cx. pp. 20, 21). At the same time I remarked on the call-note of this species, which is less loud, somewhat harsher, and is uttered several times in quick succession. The Rock-Pipit only utters a single note, unless alarmed. These remarks have been written rather fully, as I hope some of my fellow-ornithologists will take up this subject. It is, I consider, of the utmost importance to find out whether this and other species of birds formerly believed to be very rare and accidental visitors are not more often, if not regularly, met with on migration in the British Islands.

It is somewhat unfortunate that of late years it has become a "fashion" for certain people to raise an outcry in the press and elsewhere against the so-called "slaughter" of rare birds! All praise is due to those who are doing their utmost to protect rare breeding species, or birds that once bred here, and still occur on migration; but when, as often happens now, after the recording of a rare Warbler, Pipit, or some such bird—birds which never have bred, and never are likely to breed, in this country—a letter appears referring to the sickening list of slaughter, &c., one feels obliged to make a reply, and hence these remarks of mine. At the same time one feels inclined to wonder whether these persons

would know, or even notice, the birds in question if they came across them.

The Water-Pipit (*A. spipoletta*) was first noticed as occurring in Britain in 1864, when one was obtained at Brighton and one at Worthing (Borrer, 'Birds of Sussex,' p. 102), and these two specimens were recorded by Mr. John Pratt, of Brighton, and sent to Gould for determination. The Brighton specimen passed into the collection of the late Bishop Wilberforce, while Mr. Boynton, of Ulsome Grange, in Yorkshire, purchased the other (Borrer).

In 1868 one, shot at Shoreham, passed into the collection of the late Mr. Borrer, as did another obtained at the same place the following year. Subsequently—i. e. between 1869 and 1895—two were obtained, one at Lancing and one at Shoreham. One of these, I fancy, is the bird now in the British Gallery of the Natural History Museum at South Kensington, labelled, "ad ♂, Sussex, April, 1873." This bird is in full winter plumage. There is also a skin in the British Museum from the Seeböhm collection, labelled "*Anthus obscurus*, England," but bearing no date. This example, however, was obviously obtained in the spring, as the fresh pink colour is just appearing on the neck.

On April 5th, 1895, Mr. Caton Haigh shot a Water-Pipit at Tetney, Lincolnshire, and on April 5th, 1897, he shot another at the mouth of Glaslyn, Carnarvonshire; while he obtained yet another in Carnarvonshire on Dec. 3rd of the same year, 1897 (Howard Saunders, 'Manual of British Birds,' 2nd ed. pp. 141 and 755).

In 1900, Feb. 19th, a male (in winter plumage) was shot on the marsh between Hollington and Bexhill by a boy, who took it, in company with some Bramblings, to Mr. Bristow, of St. Leonards. It was subsequently recorded by my friend Dr. N. F. Ticehurst (Zool. 1900, p. 278). I saw the bird after it had been stuffed.

On Oct. 29th, 1902, I shot an adult female (one of two) at Rye Harbour (Howard Saunders, Bull. B. O. C. xcii., November, 1902).

On Oct. 26th, 1904, I obtained a young male at Rye. On this date, as on the day (Oct. 29th, 1902) when I obtained my first specimen, there had been a great arrival of Rock-Pipits (*A. obscurus*). On Nov. 14th I obtained one of two seen near Pevensy, and on

Nov. 17th of the same year (1904) Mr. E. C. Arnold shot one near Eastbourne. On Nov. 23rd, 1904, another was obtained by myself at Pevensey, while two days later Mr. Arnold shot another near Eastbourne (Zool. 1905, p. 142). Several other examples were seen by myself and clearly identified during that year. On Jan. 13th, 1905, one which I afterwards examined was shot near Littlestone, in Kent. The next month I saw four at Rye (Feb. 25th), and it is interesting to note that on this day numbers of Rock-Pipits (*A. obscurus*) and *A. rupestris* (the Scandinavian form) were arriving in little flocks on the coast. On April 2nd, 1905, I noticed a fine example, apparently in summer plumage, *i. e.* with pink breast, at St. Leonards. This bird remained by the same muddy creek for four days before it continued its migration. Lastly, on Oct. 6th, 1905, I watched a Water-Pipit for some time at Rye Harbour.

For convenience of my readers I give below a tabulated form of the occurrence of this species in the British Islands.

1864.—One, Brighton ; one, Worthing, Sussex.

1868.—One, Shoreham, Sussex.

1869.—One, Shoreham, Sussex.

? .—One, Lancing ; one, Shoreham, Sussex.

1895, April 5th.—One, Tetney, Lincolnshire.

1897, April 5th.—One, Glaslyn, Carnarvon.

1897, December 3rd.—One, Carnarvon.

1900, February 19th.—One, Hollington, Sussex.

1902, October 29th.—One, Rye, Sussex.

1904, October 12th.—[Three seen at Pevensey.]

1904, October 26th.—One, Rye, Sussex.

1904, November 12th.—[Two seen, Pevensey.]

1904, November 14th.—Two seen, one shot, Pevensey.

1904, November 17th.—One, near Eastbourne.

1904, November 21st.—[One seen, Pevensey.]

1904, November 23rd.—One, Pevensey.

1904, November 25th.—One, near Eastbourne.

1904, December 19th.—[One seen, Pevensey.]

1905, January 13th.—One, Littlestone, Kent.

1905, February 25th.—[Four seen, Rye, Sussex.]

1905, April 2nd.—[One seen, St. Leonards.]

1905, October 6th.—[One seen, Rye, Sussex.]

? .—One, no date ; Seebohm collection, British Museum.

As will be seen by the above list, I have mentioned no records since October, 1905. I have, however, since heard that this species has again been noticed in the spring in Sussex.

These, then, are the facts I wish to lay before my readers. That the Water-Pipit is a much more frequent visitor to England than has hitherto been thought is obvious from the above notes, and that it is a regular visitor to this country on migration is probable.

The numbers seen during the autumn of 1904 and spring of 1905 might be put down to an "eruption," or unusual visitation, but this is unlikely. This Pipit is a small, unobtrusive bird, and is very like the common Rock-Pipit in general appearance and habits; also it appeared again once, probably frequently, during the autumn of 1905, though whether it was as abundant as in 1904 I am unable to say, being abroad after the end of October in that year.

In conclusion, I can only urge those ornithologists who have the leisure and the inclination to obtain further notes during the next few years, and thus to obtain proofs on this subject, which is, to my mind, one of the most interesting studies in ornithology.

NOTES AND QUERIES.

MAMMALIA.

Stoat and Ferret Hybrids.—The following advertisement appeared in the 'Exchange and Mart' of November 16th, and in previous issues there have often been others precisely similar, with, I believe, the same address:—"My noted little Stoat-bred ratting strain (of Ferrets), some promising workers, 4/- each. . . . G. Davie, 4, Cowper Road, East Dereham." In the same issue of the above paper, and on the same page, there is another advertisement, in which "two pairs of half-bred Stoats, quiet as kittens, little shy, for working or crossing," are offered for sale by Mephram, Orlestone, Ham Street, Kent. No satisfactorily authenticated instance of the interbreeding of these two animals has, so far as I am aware, ever been recorded, and such a union seems improbable; moreover, the wording of advertisements is apt to be rather "broad" and "elastic," and not remarkable for scientific accuracy. At the same time, naturalists living near to either of these addresses, the second in particular, might at least find it interesting to examine and make enquiries respecting these reputed hybrids.—G. T. ROPE (Blaxhall, Suffolk).

AVES.

Grasshopper-Warbler in Midlothian.—A pair of Grasshopper-Warblers (*Locustella naevia*) settled in June in a hayfield near the city, and gave us the opportunity of watching them at close quarters, but did not let us into the secret of their nesting-haunt. Repeatedly we saw the birds singing on the grass-stems, and flitting along the top of the field to the shelter of the adjoining hedge. We have sufficient proof of the birds having been in the same locality before the present season, but we think the species is still sufficiently rare with us to claim special attention from ornithologists.—A. URQUHART and R. B. WHYTE (7, Charlotte Square, Edinburgh).

Lesser Redpoll Nesting in Ross-shire.—On the last day of August, while waiting with Mr. Robert Godfrey for the appearance of Golden

Eagles near an eyrie in Strathcarron, West Ross, we were attracted by the nestling cry of a small bird in a thick-set fir-wood. After some careful stalking, we discovered that the sound came from a nest situated about fifty feet from the ground in a slender Scotch fir, and we could see the young bird flapping its wings as it continuously uttered its cry. It was impossible to reach the nest by climbing, and we shook the tree violently till the nest was dislodged. The young bird—a Lesser Redpoll (*Linota rufescens*)—was found to be a prisoner, having one foot tightly bound by several strands of wool to the lining of the nest. A dead companion was in the nest beside it. This record of the Redpoll's nesting in West Ross may be worth mentioning in view of the meagreness of the references in Harvie-Brown's lately issued 'Fauna of the North-west Highlands and Skye.'—G. A. and R. B. WHYTE (7, Charlotte Square, Edinburgh).

The Rough-legged Buzzard in Somerset. — On November 13th last I had a brief but clear view, through my glasses, of a Rough-legged Buzzard (*Buteo lagopus*) flying low, and with very slow beats of the wing, along a bare hill-side which is much frequented by rabbits near here. From its white tail, with a broad dark subterminal bar and white tip, it was presumably an adult bird.—H. MEYRICK (Clevedon, Somerset).

Totanus calidris in Bedfordshire. — As the Redshank is not a common bird in Bedfordshire, it is perhaps worthy of record that I saw one to-day (December 2nd) in the bed of a new lake which is being made in the park. — MARY DUCHESS OF BEDFORD (Woburn Abbey, Woburn).

A Remarkable Cuckoo Clutch. — Referring to the note of your correspondent, P. F. Bunyard (*ante*, p. 430), under the above heading, in which he invites readers to solve some of the points to which he calls attention, I think, in all probability, that neither of the Cuckoos removed an egg from the Hedge-Accentor's nest at the time of depositing its own, and that the nest contained only five eggs of the foster-parent originally, which is not an unusual number for the bird to have laid. As regards the nest being "beautifully concealed" and therefore difficult to find, I would suggest that the Cuckoos discovered it by watching the old birds go to it, which I believe to be often the case, as I have frequently found Cuckoos' eggs in nests so completely hidden in thick ivy that it would have been almost impossible for a Cuckoo to have found them in any other way. What the fate of the two young Cuckoos would have been it is impossible to say, but probably the

stronger one of the two would have ejected the other one from the nest with the young of the foster-parents.—E. A. BUTLER (Plumton House, Bury St. Edmunds).

The Birds of Scilly.—As recorded in the 'Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club' (xix. No. cxxvii. p. 7 (1906)), an example of the Greater Yellowshank (*Totanus melanoleucus*) was shot by Capt. Arthur Dorrien-Smith at Tresco Abbey, Isles of Scilly, on Sept. 16th, 1906. This was believed to be the first known instance of the occurrence of this species in Great Britain or any part of Europe. Capt. Arthur Dorrien-Smith, a few days later, obtained an immature specimen of the Common Bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*), which I had the pleasure of examining.—W. R. OGILVIE-GRANT.

PISCES.

File Fish on the Coast of Somerset.—On November 21st, while riding along the sands near Berrow, Somerset, I noticed an unusual-looking fish lying among the *débris* at high-water mark. My sister, who was with me, suggested it was a John Dory, but I could see by the peculiar shape of the tail, which I especially noticed, that it did not belong to that species. The fish appeared to have been dead a long time, and was hard and mummified, so much so, that when my horse by chance put his foot on it, it was not crushed. Possibly it had been cast away from some passing ship. I particularly noticed the shape of the fish, and found on reaching home that it agreed with a photo of the Trigger Fish, on page 637 of 'The Living Animals of the World,' and also with the figure in the 'Zoologist' for 1901, page 225. I have little hesitation therefore in identifying the specimen as a File or Trigger Fish (*Balistes caprisus*). The fish, I should say, was rather over a foot in length, and was of a dirty yellow colour. F. L. BLATHWAYT (Lincoln).

INSECTA.

Notes on the Mole-Cricket (*Gryllotalpa vulgaris*).—I observe that records of the occurrence of the Mole-Cricket in England are asked for (*ante*, p. 437). I have four examples in my collection, all taken in Dorsetshire, though the exact dates I cannot specify now; three of these specimens occurred in my own kitchen garden, and one at Warmwell, near Dorchester. I was not at home when one of those taken here (at Bloxworth) occurred, but I was told afterwards by the gardener and others that there were other examples both seen and

destroyed on that occasion. It is now some years since this insect has been seen here.—O. PICKARD-CAMBRIDGE (Bloxworth Rectory).

Goldsmith as a Naturalist.—BUTCHER BIRD.—That Goldsmith, when speaking of “the Butcher Bird, little bigger than a Titmouse, living in the marshes near London,” was referring to the Bearded Tit, I should think, almost certain, after reading the suggestion of the Rev. Maurice Bird (*ante*, p. 439), and looking up the authors he mentions, I am afraid I was ignorant of the fact that the Bearded Tit had ever been termed the “Least Grey Shrike.” In Edwards’s book, under this species, I see that it had been shot on several occasions “in marshes near London.” As this book was published in 1745, Goldsmith, in writing his ‘Animated Nature’ some thirty years later, no doubt made use of it, and inserted his vague remark about this species, almost quoting word for word.—BRUCE F. CUMMINGS (14, Cross Street, Barnstaple).

NOTICES OF NEW BOOKS.

A Vertebrate Fauna of Scotland. Tay Basin and Strathmore.

By J. A. HARVIE-BROWN, F.R.S.E., &c. Edinburgh: David Duglas.

THIS forms the tenth in a series of volumes devoted to a record of the vertebrate fauna of Scotland, as important a contribution to Scottish history as that almost universally devoted to the doings of noble, laird, or kirk. We often hear the remark of “back to the land,” but how little we know about it and its inhabitants other than ourselves! We can find an account of the doings of early freebooters, but the fauna of a few hundred years ago can on general inference be only visualized, for there is no faunistic record, no local enumeration—in fact, outside so recent a period as mentioned, we are in the region of animal folk-lore; while stray passages in old songs, or a few references in old books and chronicles, are all we have to compare with faunistic knowledge as understood to-day. Like national zoological paupers, we have slowly garnered these faunistic riches, which we hand on to our descendants, who should by their aid be able to solve many of those problems relating to migration and environment, which we without such an inherit-

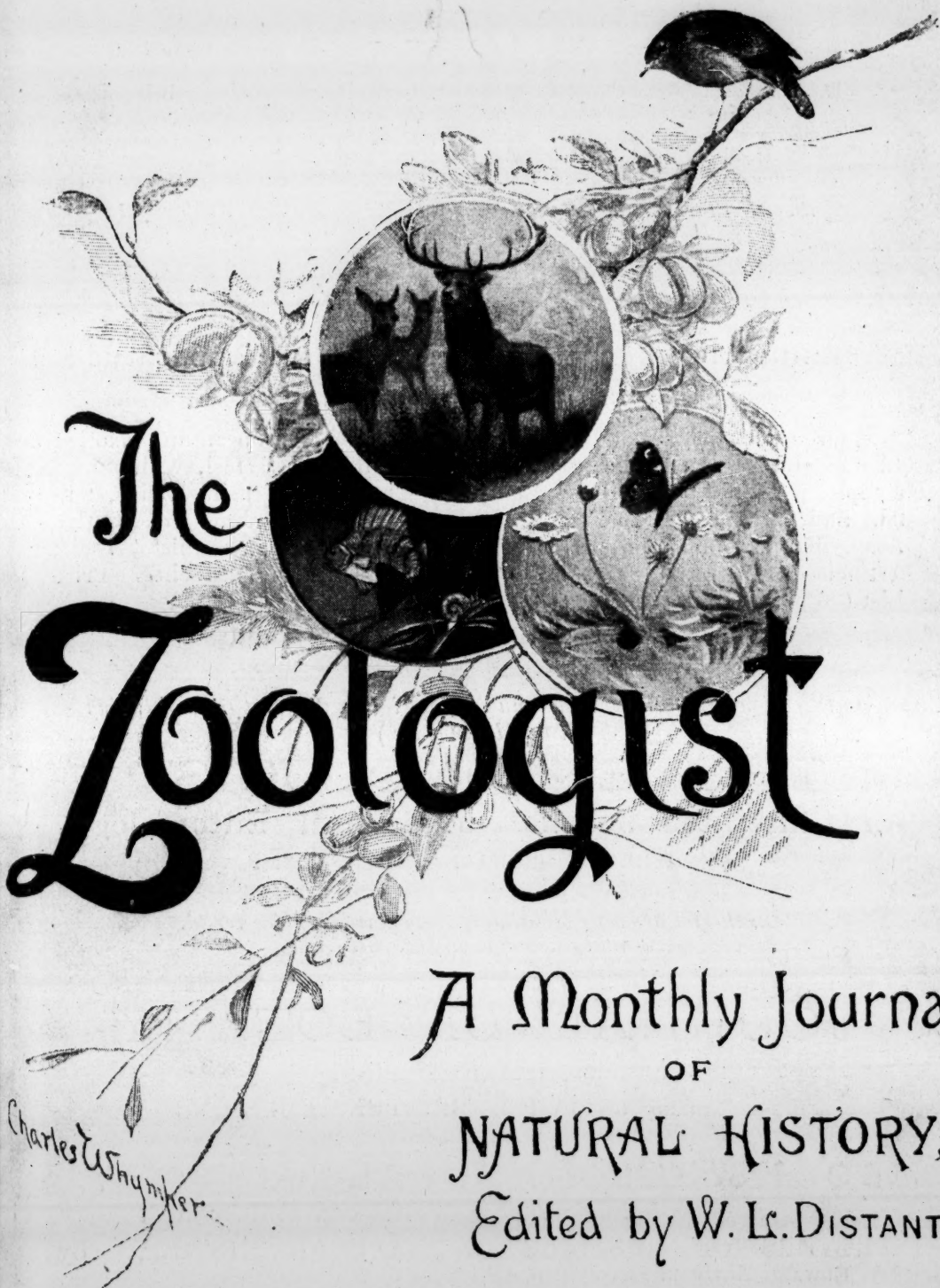
ance have vainly attempted. These ten volumes are the legacy to-day to the Scottish natural history of the future.

The area to which these annals refer is an extensive one. "The Great Basin of the River Tay" and its tributary streams alone cover a vast area, greater in capacity than that of any other river system in Scotland. It contains no fewer than some 2600 square miles. It includes the moor of Rannoch, the *Mecca* of many entomologists; but insects are barred—this is a vertebrate fauna. The descriptive chapters renew our acquaintance with some scenes long since familiar, and we read again of several acquaintances long since gone on. Among the portraits is a good one of Buchanan White, and many days have passed since, kilted, he first visited us near London. This portion of the book is all the better for being written by a Scotchman—it is reminiscential—and we can understand that if the mercantile Scot loves to come south, the Scottish naturalist must yearn to get back.

There is a wealth of record in the narrative of the birds, which, of course, cannot be reproduced here, and to which full reference is beyond our space. We may, however, refer to the Tufted Duck (*Fuligula cristata*), which a contributor recently stated in these pages was nowhere common in Yorkshire (*ante*, p. 432). But in this Scottish area we read "that it is one of our commonest Ducks on all suitable lochs throughout the central and east portions, and just outside the south-west boundary of the area in Forth." Of this Duck, Mr. Harvie-Brown gives a very full account, and a map illustrating its nesting dispersal in Scotland. An enormous increase in the number of Starlings is recorded, and the author states: "The Starling in its millions is becoming a poisonous pest, literally an insanitary and ever-increasing evil." The account of the dispersal of the Twite (*Linota flavirostris*) in this area will interest some contributors to 'The Zoologist' who recently discussed the question.

Mammalia, Reptilia, and Amphibia are also enumerated, but Pisces are ignored. The volume is well illustrated, and we may say, with Carlyle, "On all sides, are we not driven to the conclusion that, of the things which man can do or make here below, by far the most momentous, wonderful, and worthy are the things we call Books?"





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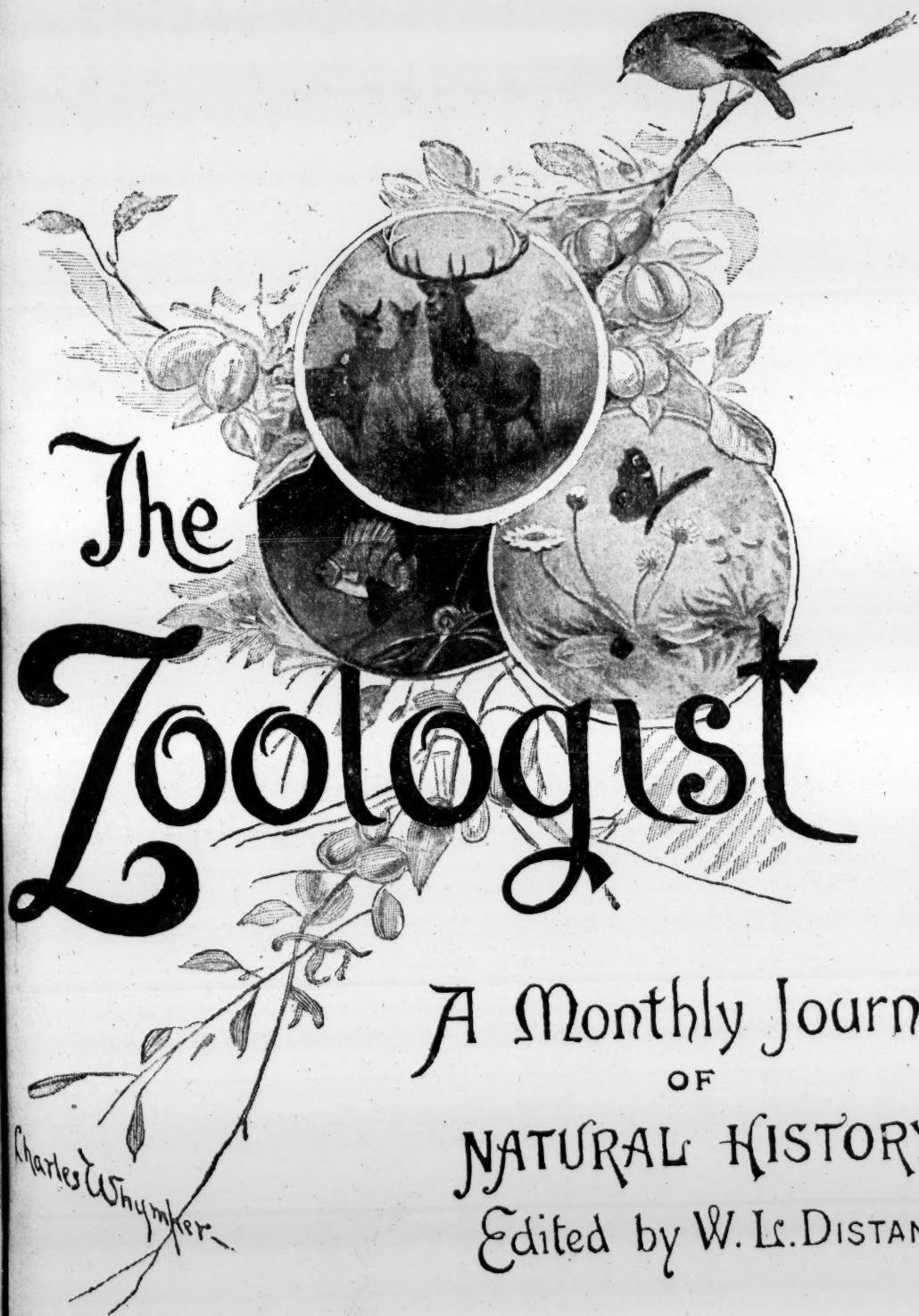
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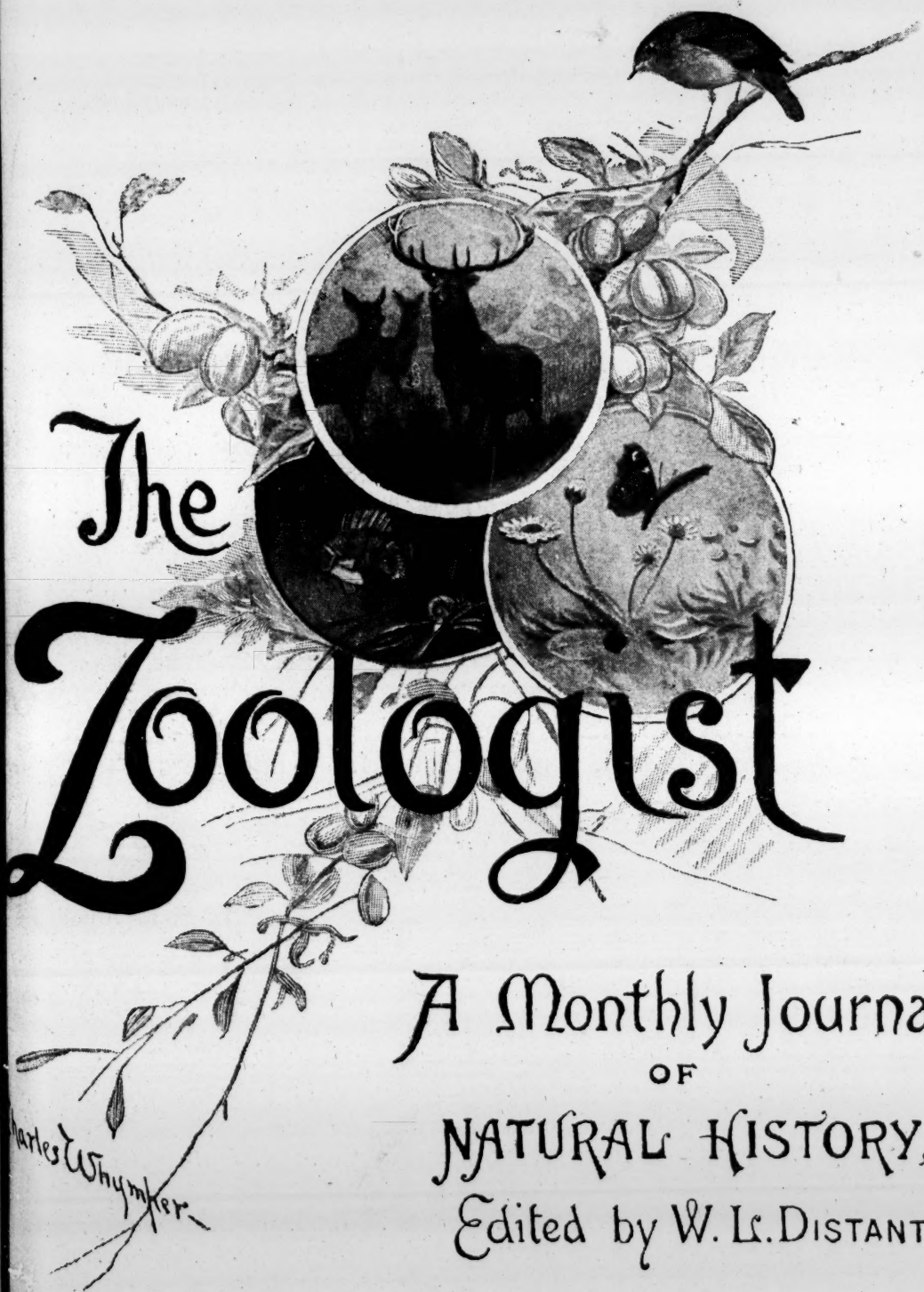
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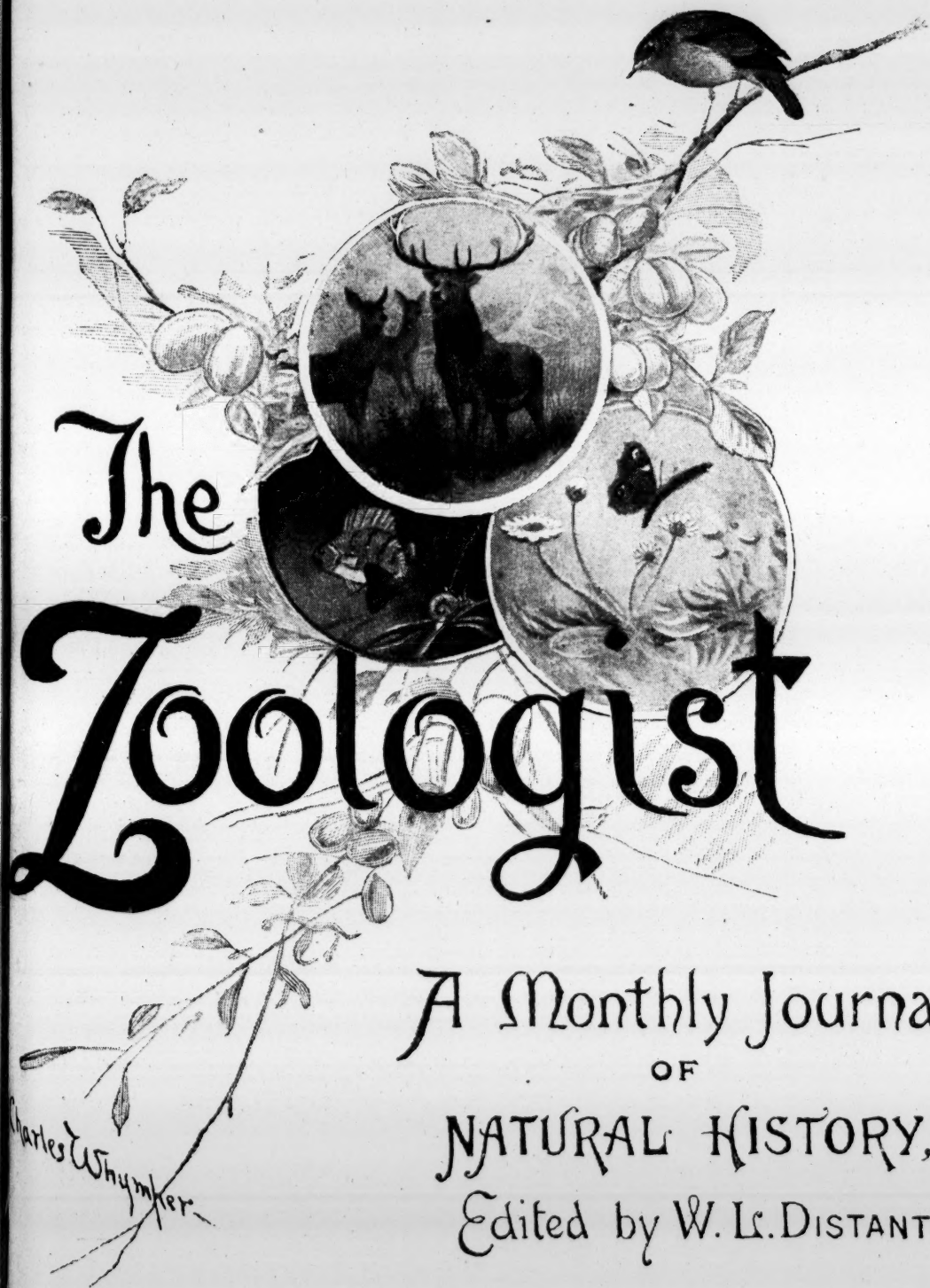
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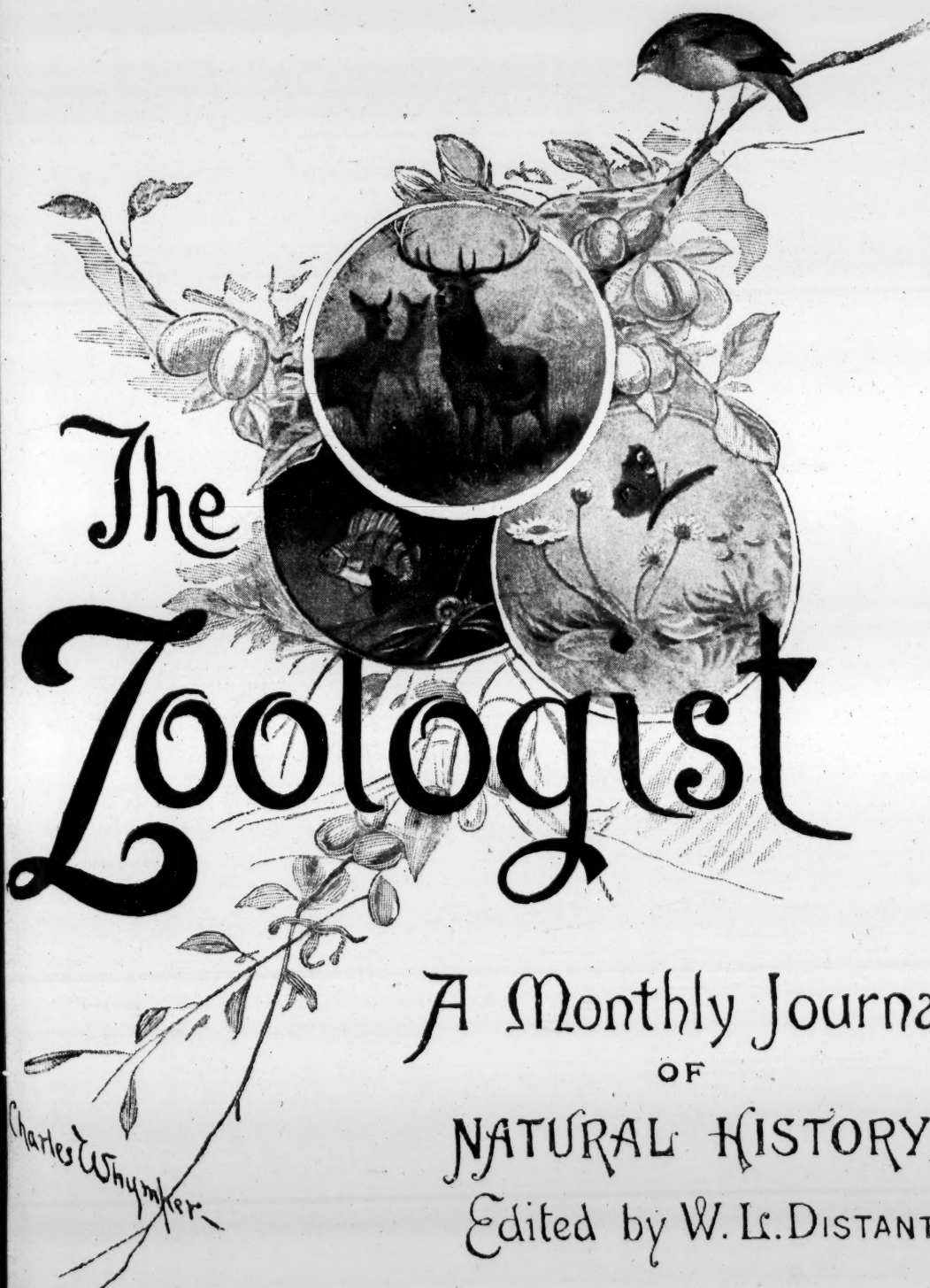
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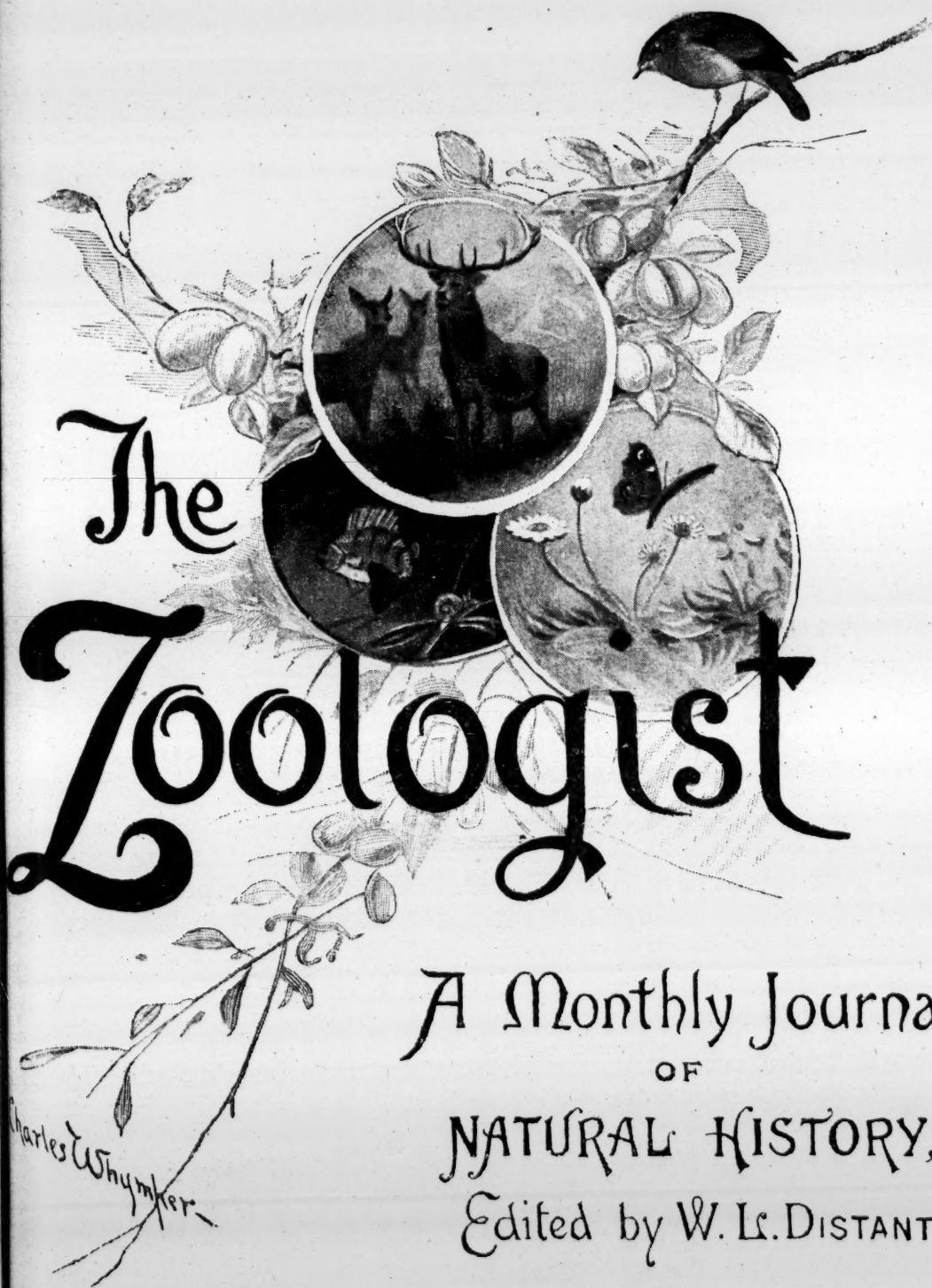
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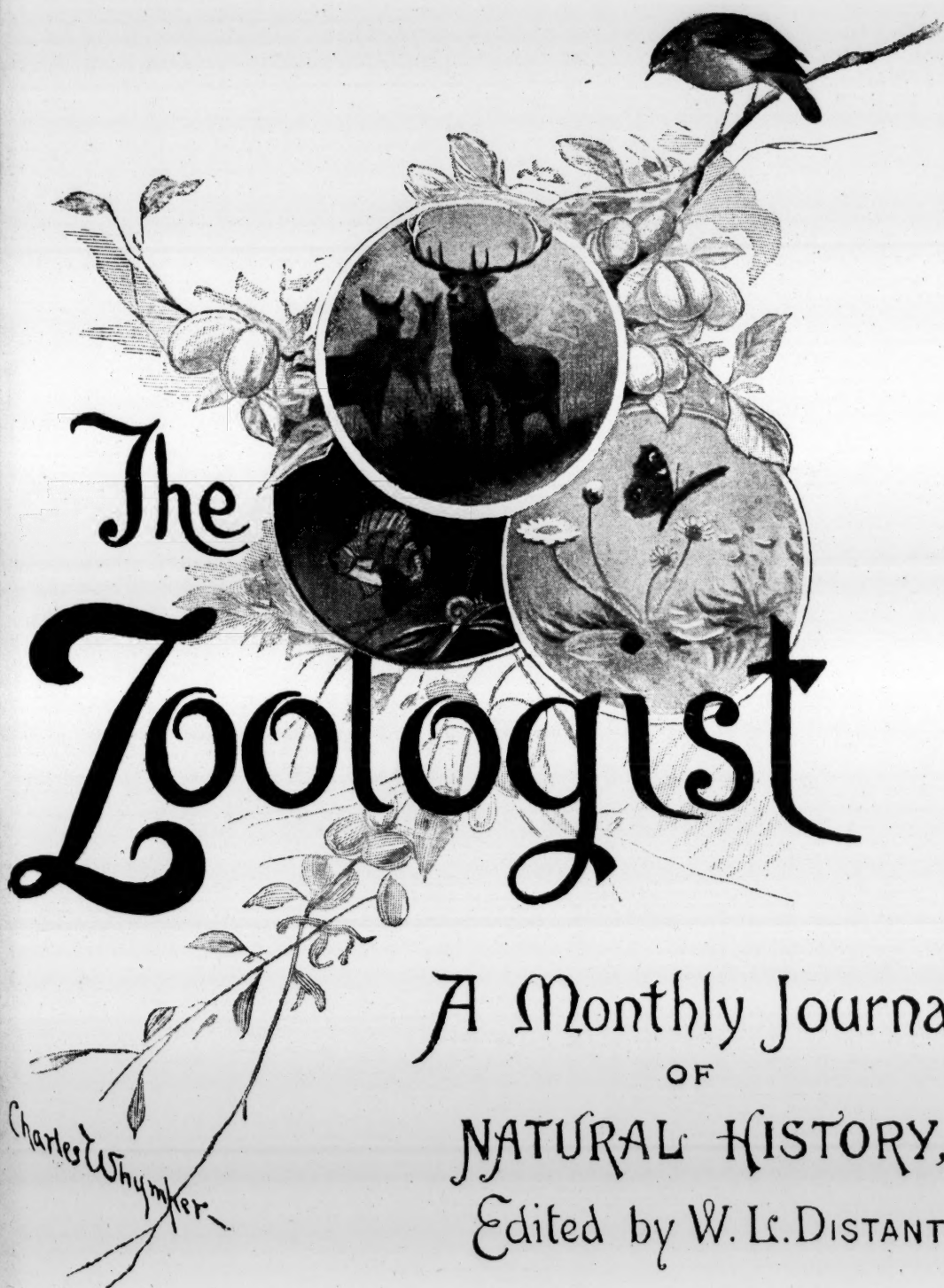
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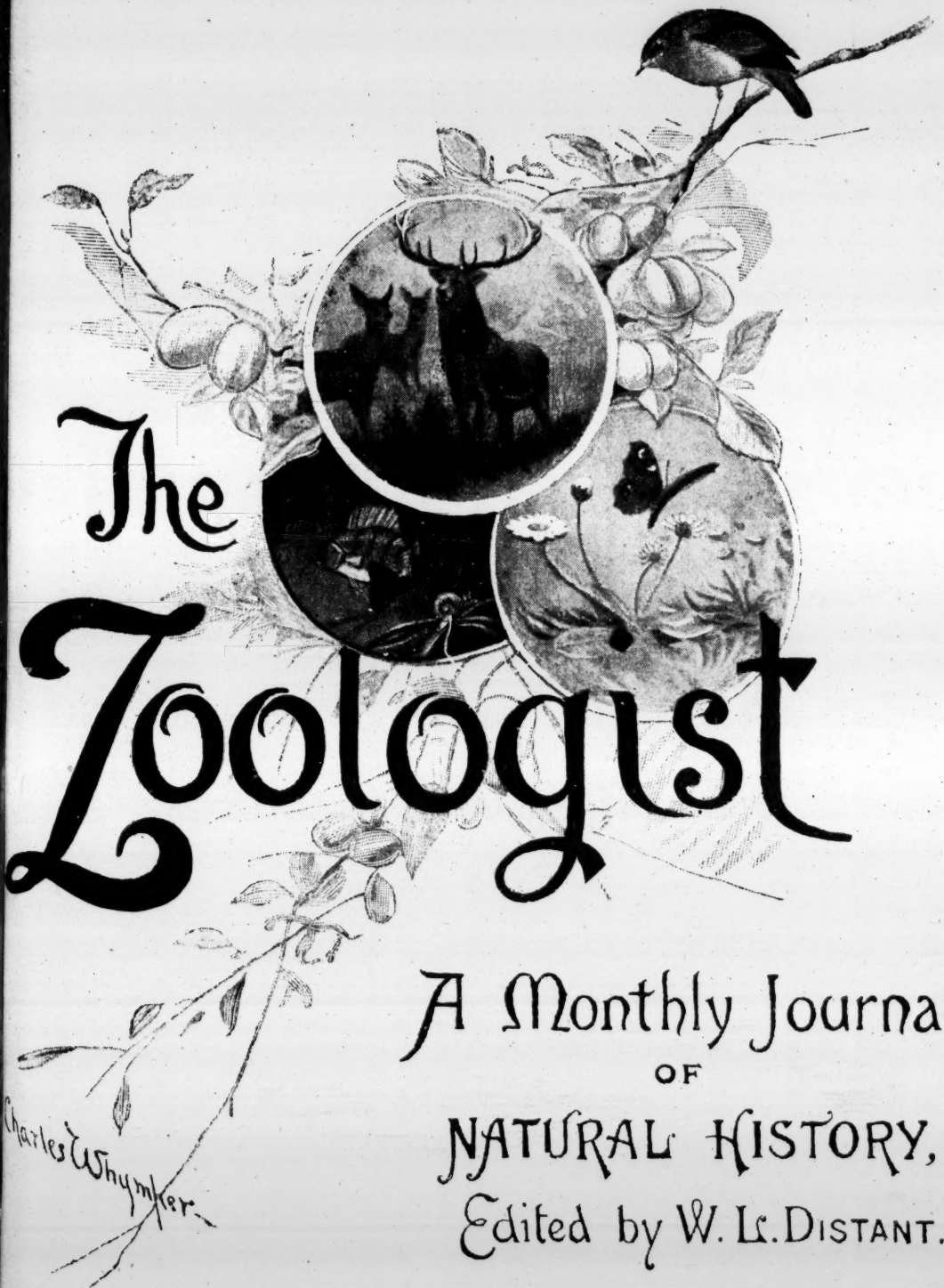
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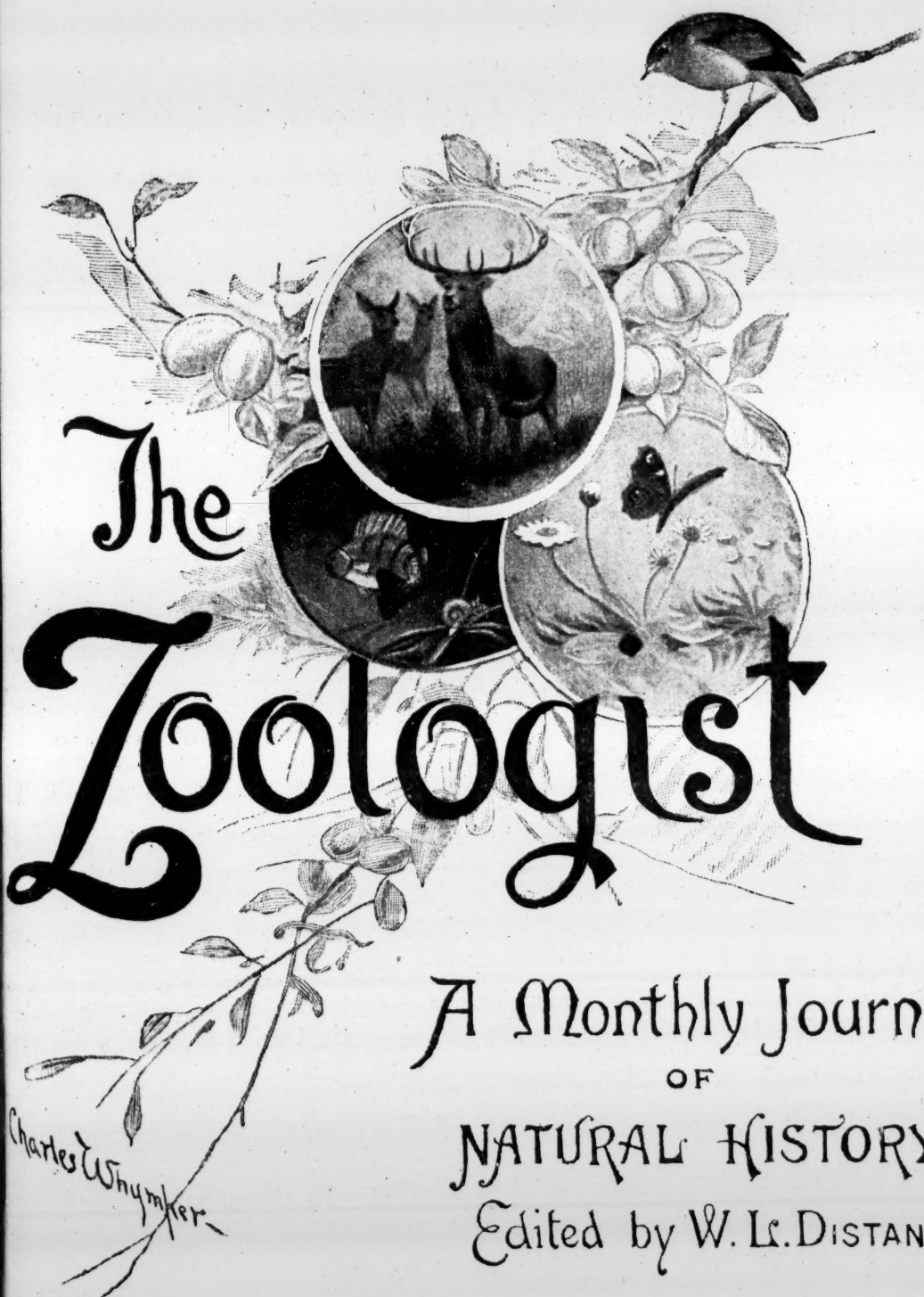
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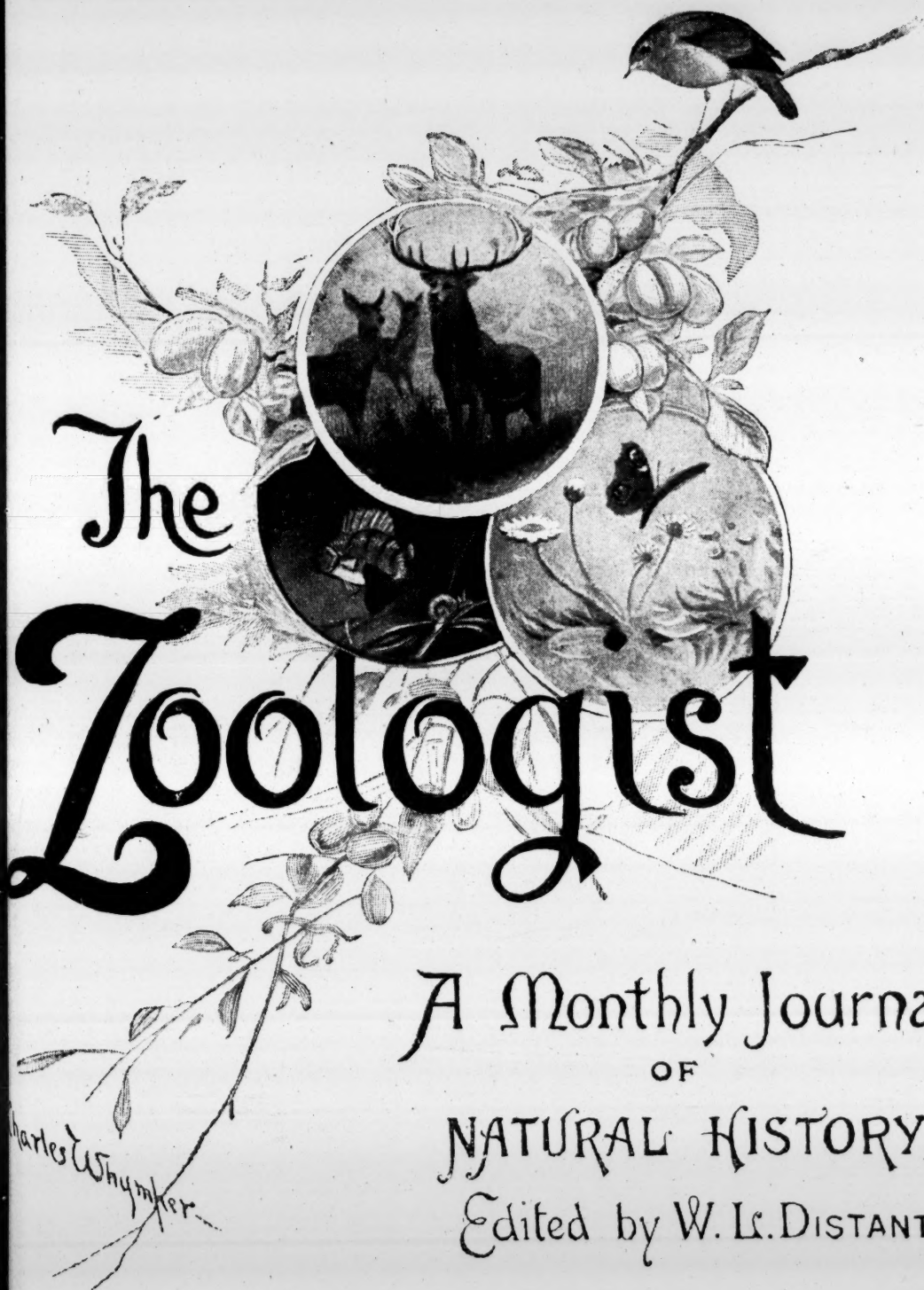
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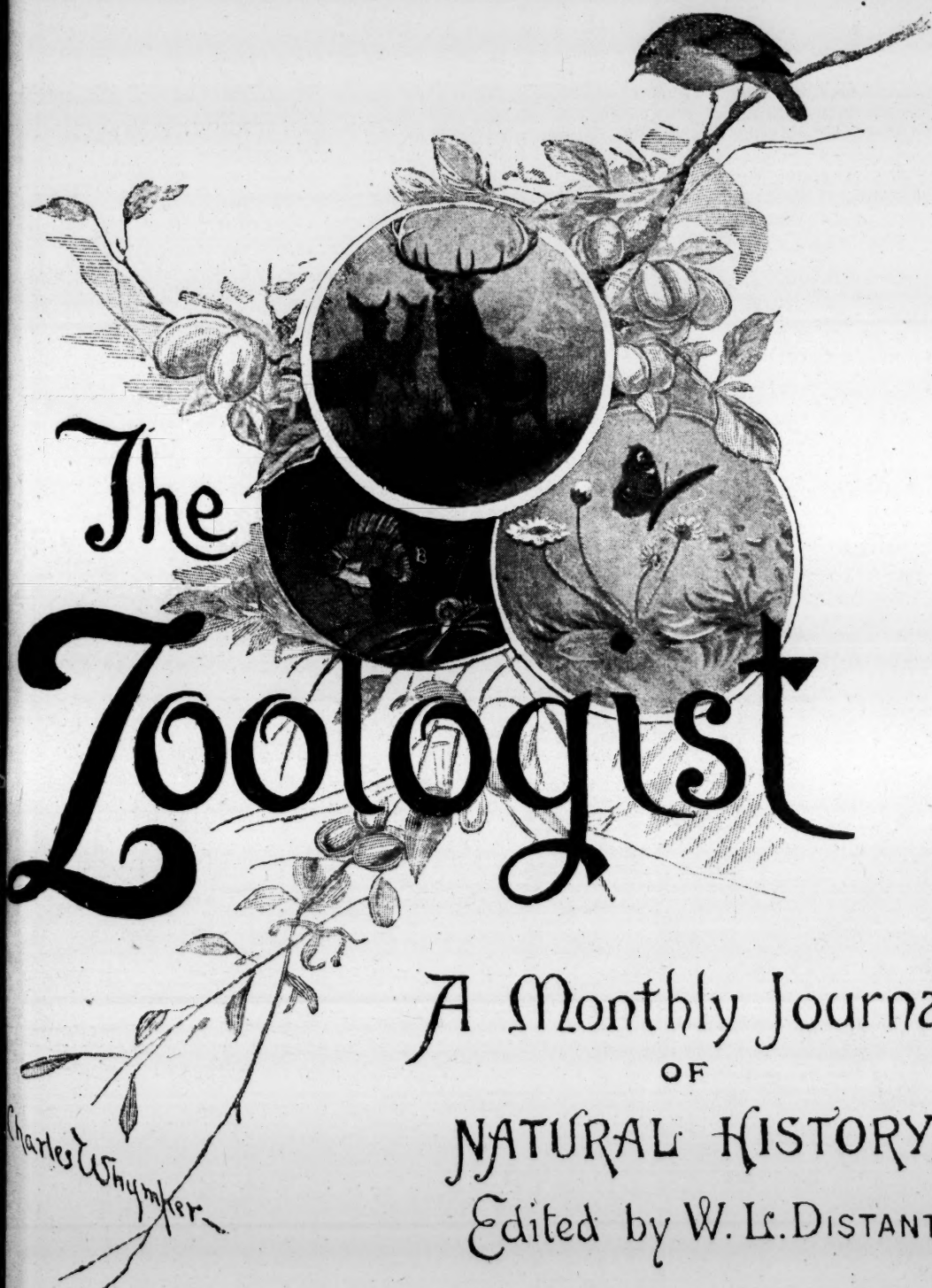
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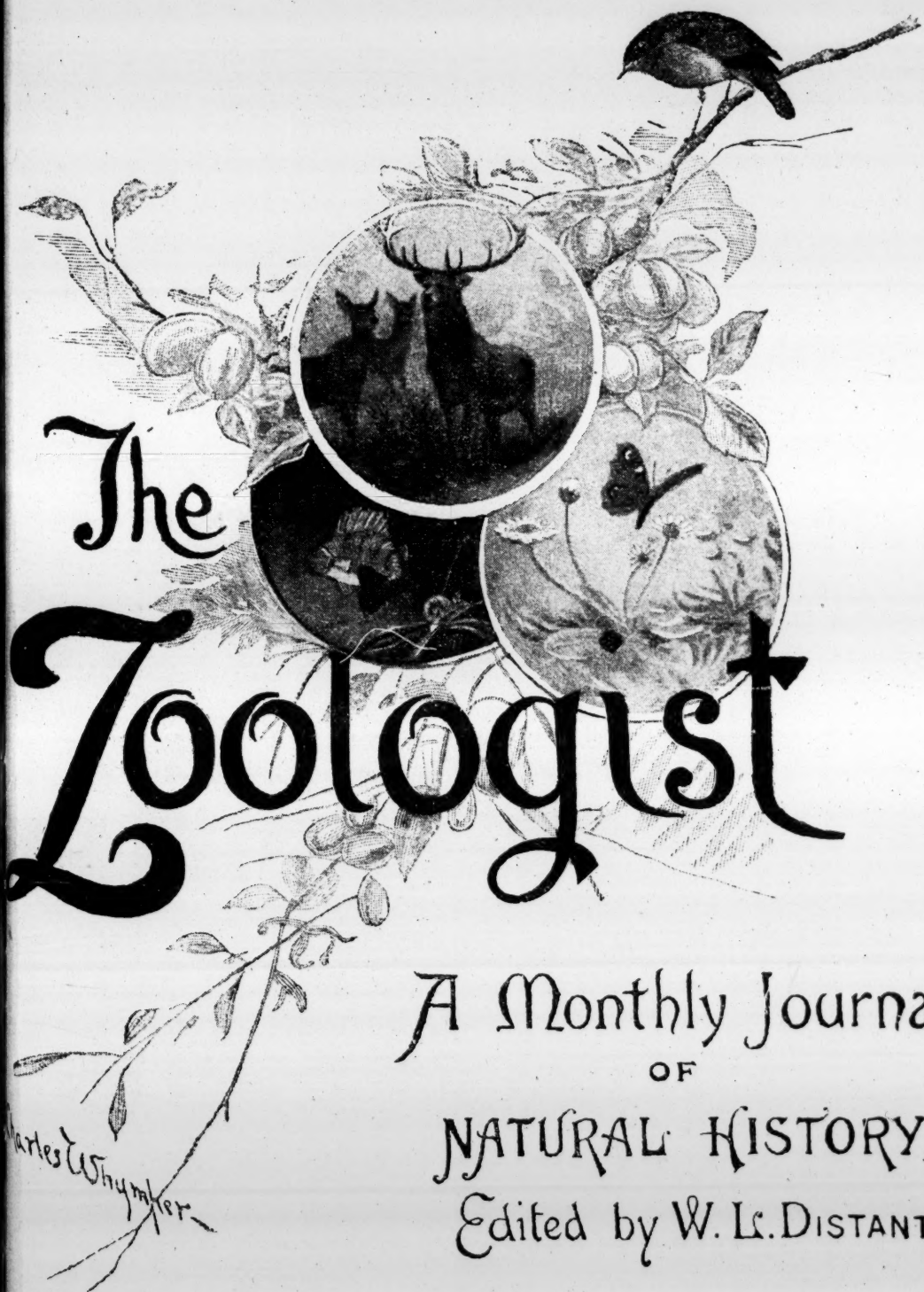
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